

DRAFT- Boston's FY 2007 WIA Plan Executive Summary

PART III. PLAN NARRATIVE

For FY07, Boston hopes to “hold the course” outlined in prior WIA plans. Workforce investment system personnel remain committed to providing quality services to our jobseeker and business customers. However, faced with a drastic cut in WIA funding, the initial recommendations in the plan are to focus on the most essential infrastructure and services necessary to maintain workforce development capacity.

Over the years, Boston has brought substantial resources to enhancing the WIA system. The City, through English for New Bostonians, the Neighborhood Jobs Trust, and Empowerment Zone and Youth Opportunity funding has sought to expand and deepen the resources available to workforce customers in Boston. Additional federal grants have added to the system's richness. Through SkillWorks, the City has leveraged its own contribution to bring in sizeable private foundation funding. Most recently, private sector foundation money has been tapped to augment career center resources. The result of these efforts has been that WIA is not the exclusive source of funding for workforce development programs and has not been primarily the source of funding for growth, new initiatives or innovation. However, with the dramatic reduction in WIA funds, any additional resources in the Boston system will need to be focused on maintaining core operations instead of responding to recent trends or getting out in front of growing needs in the community or the labor market.

Even with resources other than WIA contributing to system capacity, the additional demands on the system have dwarfed additional resources. Over the past five years the job seeker demand at career centers increased by 271% with no additional resources. According to the most recent job vacancy survey, 55% of all job vacancies in Greater Boston require at least an associate's degree, with no growth in training resources.

The Boston Globe, commenting on the “lean” 2007 budget released by Mayor Menino, quoted an advisor to the Mayor as saying, “You can't do more with less. You do less with less.” With FY07 WIA funding cuts of roughly one quarter of the amount available in FY06, we will be doing less. There will be cuts in the numbers of ITAs available for skills training for both dislocated workers and Title I adult customers. There will be fewer slots available for limited English speakers in English for Employment Programs. There will be fewer components funded with youth monies. There will be system-wide staffing reductions. We will be faced with difficult decisions about which essential services to cut.

1. Please describe the local area's overarching initiatives/objectives for providing services to job seekers for FY 2007.

- a. The response should focus on efforts to be primarily funded through the local area's general FY 2007 allocation, but should also describe the status/progress made on the jobseeker initiatives cited in the FY 2006 Plan and how the planned FY 2007 focus builds on the prior year's efforts. The response should also demonstrate that efforts will respond not only to the needs of the general job seeker customer base, but to specifically targeted job seeker constituencies as well (UI claimants, Veterans, EAS participants, the Disabled, Youth, Offenders, etc.).*

DRAFT- Boston's FY 2007 WIA Plan Executive Summary

Boston's workforce system's overarching initiatives/objectives for providing services to job seekers are focused, as they were in the two previous years, on providing high quality and results-oriented services to unemployed job seekers through career centers and training opportunities. However, for FY07, we have to put these intentions in the framework of the severe cuts to funding that Boston faces. While our objectives remain, they will be actualized in an environment substantially different from that of the two previous years. Resources will be scarce. We anticipate that problems will arise in the delivery of the services so critical to our customers, including insufficient capacity to meet demand for services for both youth and adults, and very little capacity to provide individualized services. In any given year there are unanticipated demands by particular groups of people or for targeted services. We will have no capacity to respond to unanticipated demands given how stretched resources will be to maintain core operations.

In order to further Boston's objectives for jobseekers, the workforce system in FY07 will focus on:

- Managing the simultaneous increased volume of customers accessing career centers and the diminution of financial resources available to provide services while making every effort to maintain quality.
- Making effective use of other funding streams to help support capacity to serve special populations with extraordinary barriers to employment including the chronically homeless, persons with disabilities, limited English speakers, ex-offenders.
- Using labor market information to align outreach to employers with the skills of job seekers who are using career center services.

Managing Volume

In the light of the reductions in WIA funding for FY07, this goal will be the biggest challenge for the system and will absorb much more of our energies than it has in the past and thereby lesson our capacity to rise above providing more than the fundamentals. While the funding streams that support career centers have declined steadily over the past seven years, the Boston workforce system has experienced a sharp increase in the over-all volume of job seekers accessing career center services, particularly those who are unemployed. In FY05, as the full impact of the "Connecting Claimants" initiative was felt, the career centers served 28,358 job seekers, a 271% increase in job seeker volume since FY00.¹ The proportion of unemployed job seekers rose from 73% in FY98 to 93% in FY05, when 24,823 jobseekers identified themselves as unemployed, the highest share of unemployed job seekers since the career centers opened in FY98. Only 5,338 of these unemployed job seekers came to the centers through the Connecting Claimants program; others were referred by other state or community agencies or through word of mouth.

For FY 07, if the unemployment rates of both the State and City continue to decline, we expect to see a decreased rate of growth from the Connecting Claimants sector. However, there

¹ Mayor's Office of Jobs & Community Services and The Boston Private Industry Council, *Report to the 185th General Court, Boston One-Stop Career Centers, Fiscal Year 2005*, Submitted March 2006, pp. 1-2.

DRAFT- Boston's FY 2007 WIA Plan Executive Summary

are other sectors of career center unemployed customers which could rapidly expand in FY07. Depending on the specifics of the regulations that the federal Office for Children is scheduled to release at the end of June for implementation July 1, there could be an influx of TANF customers seeking employment. If the United States government begins large-scale troop withdrawals from Iraq, career centers could see a substantial increase in recently de-commissioned servicemen and women as customers. With much lower financial resources ourselves, we would hope that workforce partners would infuse additional dollars into the system to help meet these demands if they occur. Hopefully, the Department of Transitional Assistance would channel more funding to career centers to meet increased demand for services for welfare clients. The WIB's DOL/ODEP Initiative to serve the chronically homeless is working closely with the New England Shelter for Homeless Veterans and is expanding the areas where the career centers and shelter are working together to provide employment services to homeless veterans. However, this grant has suffered through multiple rescissions and FY07's funding level is sharply reduced. Boston is committed to working with the federal VOICES program instituted in Massachusetts to expand and strengthen services for veterans returning home from duty in Iraq and Afghanistan.

As we reported in our FY06 plan, not only has there been an increase in volume of customers for career centers to respond to, but also it is clear the Connecting Claimant initiative brought customers with a different set of expectations to the career centers. Over the past three years, career centers made substantial progress in making adaptations in their service mix to meet these needs. If FY07 brings new cohorts of customers with differing expectations, adequate resources do not exist within the WIA system as currently funded to meet the need for adaptations. Even before the FY07 funding cuts, career centers had adopted "above and beyond" as their modus operandi. There is NO slack, and very little elasticity in the system to respond to new and different demands.

Boston's Wagner Peyser allocation for FY07 is below the FY06 allocation. While Boston uses these funds to help provide core services to career center customers, they have always been far from sufficient to underwrite the service levels required by the Connecting Claimants initiative, even at the "core" level. With the funding cuts in FY07, pressures on the system's ability to maintain high levels of quality service will be assured. We cannot predict the exact nature of these pressures, but are prepared to devote as much energy and as many resources as are possible to relieving them.

b. The response should clearly explain the basis of the area's FY 2007 job seeker strategies/service design, the anticipated service and performance goals and the expected benefit to the local economy.

For adults with limited workforce histories or obsolete skills, training is critical to eventual re-employment. For this reason, Boston has traditionally directed a large portion of its adult Title I-a and I-d allocations to providing occupational skills training. For FY07, 75% of service funding will be allocated to training services and 25% of both I-a and I-d services funding will be directed toward the provision of intensive services by career centers.

For FY07, the Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker funding streams have been significantly decreased, while the Sec. 173 (e) funds have been eliminated. On top of these FY07 funding cuts, the average cost of an ITA in Boston has risen over the \$4,500 projected for FY06. For FY07, we project an average ITA cost of \$5,000.

The best way to demonstrate the benefit to the local economy and the return on investment these WIA enrollees would generate is through the wage record reports filed by

DRAFT- Boston's FY 2007 WIA Plan Executive Summary

employers with the Department of Revenue. Because wage records lag by one year, the latest information available from this source is for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2004. In that year, Boston career centers had placed in jobs 71% of all unemployed jobseekers who used their services. Altogether in Boston, these jobseekers earned \$87.6 million in wages and paid an estimated \$4.4 million in income taxes to the Commonwealth.² This does not capture additional spending, sales tax revenues or reductions in spending by the UI Trust Fund caused by helping people get back to work more quickly.

Using other funding streams to help support services to special populations with Extraordinary Barriers to Employment

Boston continues to make effective use of other funding streams to enhance its capacity to serve special populations with extraordinary barriers to employment.

- In the case of Limited English Speakers, in the past we have been able to seek National Emergency Grant (NEG) funding to deal with major plant closures involving large numbers of limited English speakers. In both the Power One and Federal Mogul closings these provided an additional infusion of training resources and led to service models that have attracted attention. Both of these grants ended in the course of FY 2005.

Exhibiting capacity to serve limited English speakers remains important to the Boston workforce system given the fact that Census 2000 data indicated the only source of population growth in the past decade in the Boston labor market had been foreign immigration. In the absence of such NEG grants, the City continues to allocate WIA dollars to ESOL capacity through English for Employment courses. According to data on Participant Characteristics served with WIA funds in Boston during FY 2006, 21% of Adult enrollees and 17% of dislocated enrollees were limited English speakers, indicating that the city's workforce system is serving this targeted group through career center services. (Statewide averages are 8% and 5%, respectively.) These demographics are in part the result of the linguistic competencies that have been built up in career center staff over the years. Center staff members speak a total of 19 languages. In Chinese, 5 dialects are spoken.

- While we have no pending NEG's focused on limited English speakers, the state has submitted an NEG request to DOL to serve the workers dislocated by the closing of the Filene's stores. The demographics of this group, of whom many are over 55 years old³, mean that, they too, are a special population—mature workers. As of the writing of this plan, DOL has not responded to the state's request.
- A BRAC grant from the Department of Defense has allowed us to provide career center services to employees whose jobs were lost as the result of the most recent round of base closings. This grant will be carried forward into FY07, when a relatively small amount of additional funds will become available.

² Ibid. p. 2.

³ Because management did not provide demographic information to the Rapid Response team, arriving at a precise number in this category is difficult. Union figures, for the 4 union stores (which include the Boston store) indicate that 70% of that group is above age 45.

DRAFT- Boston's FY 2007 WIA Plan Executive Summary

- Other outside funds have allowed Boston to increase its expertise in serving both the homeless and persons with disabilities. Building on a successful Career Center model of working with community based service providers, Boston received a US Department of Labor grant to improve and expand employment services to the chronically homeless. In addition to this initiative, the Department of Transitional Assistance awarded the Mayor's Office of Jobs and Community Services a food stamp initiative designed to find homeless food-stamp-eligible individuals and, while enrolling them in the food stamp program, introduce them to opportunities for employment services. Career Centers were integrated into both these initiatives and were allocated resources to help them develop and refine their capacity to serve these populations. Both these initiatives will continue into FY07, although the DOL grant will have a significantly smaller amount of funds next year.
- Finally, we continue to provide services to ex-offenders with grant dollars, primarily through a partnership between The Work Place and the Framingham House of Correction for Women. This partnership is particularly noteworthy because of its focus on female prisoners, an under-served category within an under-served group. Re-entry continues to be an area of interest for the Department of Labor and the Department of Justice. As such, any opportunities for continuing and expanding this work will be investigated. All funding for this area is based on a competitive response to federal SGAs or state RFPs. The successful work so far and the depth of experience gained will strengthen future responses to funding opportunities.

Using labor market data to align outreach to employers with skills of job-seekers

There is some evidence that the Boston region's economy has improved in some important aspects over the course of CY2005.⁴ While enormous advances in job creation did not occur, there are indications that, at best, some jobs had been added, and, at a minimum, the enormous job loss the city and state suffered during the economic downturn had abated.

Although reports indicate that there has been an improvement in both the Boston and Massachusetts economies over the past year, unemployment rates for CY2005 (Boston, 5.2%; Massachusetts, 4.8%) are still well above the levels before the economic downturn, and the city's was .4 percentage points above the state's. In fact, in February and March 2006, the state's unemployment rate was above the national level for the first time in 11 years.⁵

Unemployed people represent, in many cases, jobs lost. Between 2000 and 2004, the city lost an estimated 49,597 jobs, representing about 7.3% of total employment.⁶ In comparing June 2004 composition of employment for the Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH NECTA with that of June 2005, the most severe job losses percentage-wise occurred in information and transportation/warehousing/utilities. Gains were evident in construction, wholesale trade, retail trade, professional and business services, education and health services and leisure and hospitality. Very small losses or gains were apparent in all other sectors except government, which was unchanged.⁷

⁴ See, for example, *The Boston Economy 2005—Moving Forward*, Boston Redevelopment Authority, Report #599, October 2005 and *Economic Impact Report 2006—Massport Connecting*, Massachusetts Port Authority, partnering with the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, March 2006.

⁵ "State unemployment rate shows slight monthly decrease," *Boston Business Journal*, April 20, 2006.

⁶ *The Boston Economy 2005*, BRA, October 2005, p. 11.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 13.

DRAFT- Boston's FY 2007 WIA Plan Executive Summary

Given the slow economic recovery and the job loss from the recession, putting people back to work remains challenging throughout the state.⁸ This is particularly true for Boston, where job loss was greater percentage-wise than the state's and where the population has larger concentrations of residents at both the "high" and "low" ends of almost all demographic indicators.

During FY06, the Boston workforce system continued to evolve in its use of labor market data to assess the skills of its talent pool in relation to the demands of the business sector. Twice Bob Vinson presented to career center staff a 3-session LMI series which included Understanding Labor Market Concepts, Recent Labor Market Trends in Boston and a practical application of LMI for Boston. For FY07, because of the funding cuts, it remains unclear whether the Workforce Board can continue to sponsor such capacity-building initiatives.

c) The response should outline the specific, collaborative roles of the Board, the Title I Administrator and the area's Career Center(s) and the specific planned activities and/or strategies to support the FY 2007 job seeker initiatives/objectives.

PIC and JCS staff work in collaboration to staff the workforce board. Included in these activities are preparing systems analysis reports, recommending policy directives for the Board's consideration and approval, providing oversight and guidance to the career center system, reviewing vendor courses for local approval, overseeing the issuance of ITAs and monitoring programs used by Boston customers. In FY06, WIB staff oversaw the rechartering of the city's three career centers. The Title I Administrator continued its role as a convener and capacity builder for the workforce development system in Boston. It once again co-sponsored a 10-week training course for job developers employed at community based vendors. Using a curriculum developed by Public/Private Ventures, this project's goal was to improve skills at the CBO level in doing business in the new environment, including interfacing with employers and developing jobs.

In a major effort at system building and integration, over the course of FY06 the Title One Administrator convened an on-going work group including staff of the WIB, the state Department of Education, SABES and Boston skills training and ABE providers to work on improving the integration of the workforce development and adult basic education systems in the city. The group sponsored two events. A "Love Fest" on Valentine's Day provided an initial opportunity for staff of training and ABE providers to interface with career center staff. On April 28, a full-day citywide conference, "Connecting the Dots," allowed an expansion of the number of attendees and provided both overall views and in-depth workshops of how the two systems might work better together. This work-group plans to continue its activities in FY07. How much it will be able to accomplish will depend in part on what financial resources it has at its disposal. Funding cuts could limit its scope.

As a response to the reauthorization of TANF, the Title I administrator sponsored a training by Greater Boston Legal Services on what changes were to be expected in FY07 and how they might impact the skills training and workforce development systems. Additionally, Judith Lorei, working for the Commonwealth Workforce Coalition, conducted a brainstorming on "soft skill" development. This effort was so useful that a second gathering was held.

⁸ Even the perennially up-beat BRA analysis of the Boston 2005 economy acknowledges that "from the most recent data of late 2004 and early 2005, it *appears* that Boston's economy is moving forward and is growing again." Emphasis added.

DRAFT- Boston's FY 2007 WIA Plan Executive Summary

We regard all of these efforts as important and highly useful in building system capacity, integration and quality. We are pessimistic, however, about how many of these creative and innovative efforts we will be able to extend during FY07, as we expect that our energies will be absorbed in great part by dealing with the effects of budget cuts.

2. Please describe the local area's overarching initiatives/objectives for providing services to employers for FY 2007.

- a. The response should describe the status/progress made on the employer initiatives cited in the FY 2006 Plan and how the planned FY 2007 focus builds on the prior year's efforts. Include a comprehensive description of how employer services are supported by various resources and staffing available in the region. The response should describe how the planned focus will apply not only to business customers in general, but to any sectors of the business community specifically targeted by the Local Workforce Board for special consideration based on their projected significance in promoting economic stability and development in the local area.*

The primary initiatives and objectives for our work with employers have not changed since FY06:

- Aligning employer outreach by the career centers with the skill sets of unemployed job seekers who are using the career centers;
- Aligning economic development with workforce development;
- Supporting industry consortia.

Aligning Employer Outreach

The career centers have taken a number of steps to better serve employer customers:

- Collecting accurate and relevant skills and experience data for job seekers and matching job seekers more accurately with employers;
- Increasing the expertise of career center staff in LMI data. During FY06, efforts described above in the response to Question 1 were directed at increasing the expertise of career center staff in the regular use of LMI data. In addition, career centers make active utilization of advisory boards that include business customers to improve their delivery of services to their employer customers. Business customer evaluation of activities such as recruitments and job fairs conducted by the career centers also allow closer alignment. In addition, during FY06, career centers began working with businesses and job seekers to better understand the online application and behavioral screening processes that are becoming standard business practice among larger firms for entry-level positions.
- Collecting voice-of-the customer feedback in collaboration with the Board through interviews and focus groups; This element is discussed below in Question 5 where "Voice of the Customer" data is discussed. In addition, in FY06 career centers adapted the focus and frequency of job fairs in direct response to business customer input.
- Educating employers who are working with special populations; During the past year, career centers sponsored an employer breakfast on the issue of CORIs.

DRAFT- Boston's FY 2007 WIA Plan Executive Summary

The Board has been supporting individual career center initiatives through grant related work (HomeWork, e.g.) and one-to-one networking with employers. In FY 06 we held a business customer breakfast to promote the benefits of hiring from these populations.

Aligning Workforce Development with Economic Development

As explained in last year's plan, the head of the Boston Redevelopment Authority, the City's chief economic development agency, is a member of the area's Workforce Investment Board and the Title I Administrator works closely with the BRA to ensure that workforce planning is a critical component of any new development. Major institutions in the city are required to file Institutional Master Plans for approval by the BRA. One requirement in this approval process mandates that institutions both detail their workforce needs and implement a workforce development plan that enhances access for Boston residents to these jobs. In the immediate past, such Master Plans for the Longwood Medical Area and Harvard's Allston campus have led to increased investment in workforce development by institutional employers. Currently, institutional master plans under review include those of Massachusetts General Hospital and the Dana Farber Cancer Center.

Boston zoning law requires that commercial construction projects in excess of 100,000 square feet receive a zoning variance, one condition of which is that the developer is obliged to pay a linkage fee to the Neighborhood Jobs Trust (NJT). In April 2006, the linkage fee was increased for the first time since 2002. While this may result in greater amounts of money being available, this will only be true in the future, as any development that has already applied for a variance or zoning relief before the date of the raise has been "grandfathered" at the old rates. Funds for this Trust are used to add resources to the city's workforce development system.⁹ Obviously, this fund is dependent on the pace of large-scale development in the city. Over the past few years, the pace of construction of large office towers has slowed dramatically. One sector that has shown substantial activity recently is hotel construction. Four hotels are currently being built and 8 more have been approved.¹⁰

Supporting Industry Consortia

Given the limited nature of the WIA contribution to the city's workforce development system, many of the activities undertaken involving employers in targeted sectors are underwritten by other funding streams. This mirrors the situation described above in discussing services to job seekers.

The Workforce Board has convened discussions with health care employers about their projected hiring needs and interest in participating in pathway programs geared toward meeting those needs. Through the Bay State Works grants, the Workforce Board designed and implemented a post-secondary pathway for recent high school graduates who had successful work experience with a hospital through summer jobs or Pro Tech, were enrolling in college and were interested in majoring in a health care program. Currently, Massachusetts General Hospital and Brigham and Women's Hospital are participating in that project. Beth Israel Deaconess and

⁹ NJT funds support skills training activities that complement those provided with WIA funds. In addition, they support English for New Bostonians and were used in the SkillWorks initiative.

¹⁰ BRA, *The Boston Economy—2005*, p. 5. In 1980, Boston had 6,907 hotel rooms; by October 2005, that number had increased to 15,896. Since 1997, 25 new hotels have been constructed and 5 major expansions have been built.

DRAFT- Boston's FY 2007 WIA Plan Executive Summary

East Boston Health Center have also committed to becoming partners in the project in fiscal year 2007. In addition, the Workforce Board is engaging with Massachusetts General Hospital, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Beth Israel Deaconess, Children's Hospital and Boston Medical Center in developing, designing or implementing workforce programs for incumbent workers, high school students or adults new to the labor market or who are changing careers.

The Workforce Board has started conversations with financial services firms about participating in a post-secondary program similar to the health care program described above. The Board is also working with New England College of Finance and Suffolk University to recruit and coach high school seniors and recent graduates for pathway programs that will lead to college degrees in finance-related areas.

The Workforce Board is also working with Boston University's City Lab Academy to recruit students and coach them through a pathway geared toward jobs in biomedical research. This effort will complement employer organizing among scientific, technical, engineering and mathematics (STEM) businesses for internship opportunities for high school students and recent graduates.

In the SkillWorks Initiative, NJT funds leveraged funds from private foundations for a \$20-million project that includes sectoral skills training initiatives in health care and capacity building on both the training provider and systemic levels.

b. The response should clearly explain the basis of the area's FY 2007 employer strategies/service design, the anticipated service and performance goals and the expected benefit to the local economy.

Boston will continue its on-going initiatives in FY07. Our capacity to embark on new projects will be limited by our need to closely oversee the WIA workforce development system in order to be able to respond to the ripple effects of the funding cuts.

The initiatives outlined above clearly contribute to promoting economic stability and development in the local area. They are focused on developing workers skilled in areas that are either pillars of Boston's economy or in which opportunities for well-paying jobs have been projected. They all include strong employer partnerships, and curricula has been employer-driven. Several of them include incumbent worker components aimed at improving employee retention, something that has a direct relationship to any employer's "bottom line."

c. The response should outline the specific, collaborative roles of the Board, the Title I Administrator and the area's Career Center(s) and the specific planned activities and/or strategies to support the FY 2007 employer initiatives/objectives.

This topic is covered in section 1-a above and section 5-a below.

- 3 Please describe the local area's overarching initiatives/objectives for providing services to youth for FY 2007? Please include in the description new program connections, activities, or system reforms, if any, that will be implemented in your local area based on the federal new vision for youth services, the Massachusetts's Pathways to Success by 21 (P-21) planning initiative, or other youth efforts occurring in your region.**

DRAFT- Boston's FY 2007 WIA Plan Executive Summary

Through the Boston WIA Youth Council and the Youth Transitions Task Force, a foundation-supported effort analogous to the P21 planning process, we have been working with over 30 community, state and city agencies to address struggling students and out-of-school youth. We have spent over a year doing quantitative and qualitative research, mapping services to youth and developing recommendations to address system gaps. Based on this research, our local area's overarching goals are to:

- Improve dropout data and data-sharing between the district and out-of-school youth service providers;
- Identify a lead agency and funding for outreach to dropouts
- Create more alternative education and career pathways for struggling students and recent dropouts, and for older youth/young adults.
- Coordinate dropout prevention work with the out-of-school youth work more traditionally done by the WIA-funded and juvenile justice-connected organizations.
- Coordinate youth workforce development initiatives with adult initiatives to serve older youth/young adults.

As we work collaboratively on the long-range goals, some immediate outcomes have been:

- A boost to WIA providers' networked capacity to look at data, coordinate with the school district, seek additional funds and improve service through a grant-funded network coordinator;
- A school district commitment of \$250,000 for more alternative education seats;
- A plan to develop program quality reviews for both district-funded and WIA-funded alternative education programs in the upcoming school year
- The imminent publication of a guide to alternative pathways by the school district, including information on WIA-funded as well as district-funded programs;
- The piloting of a WIA adult-funded facilities maintenance training program for disconnected young adults who have not accessed career center services.

a. For FY 2007 what are your area's primary priorities and strategies for managing and improving performance and access to the WIA Title I youth services?

Our primary priorities for FY 07 will be to continue to serve older, out of school youth, especially disconnected males. We are currently serving 51% out of school youth and we would like to increase that percentage. In order to manage and improve performance we will continue to use both the State's reports for WIA Youth and the reports we have in house. Our strategy last year was to review each individual client in MOSES file-by-file, page by page. This proved to be successful giving us greatly improved performance. Access will be managed by continuing to conduct monthly provider meetings during which provider staff share information and make connections for referrals resources needed to accomplish each client's goals.

b. For FY 2007 identify the specific actions your board will take to implement the Common Measures for youth.

DRAFT- Boston's FY 2007 WIA Plan Executive Summary

1) Do you anticipate changing the priority targeted population(s) – i.e., younger v. older youth, in-school v. out-of-school youth? Have these changes affected your process for selecting youth service providers, or in the mix of service elements that you need to deliver?

At this point we do not anticipate changes in our target populations, the process for selecting providers, or in the mix of service elements needed due to Common Measures. We will use data from reports from the State to determine our performance level for the Common Measures and then determine what changes, if any, need to be made at the appropriate time.

2) What do you anticipate will be the major barriers/challenges to implementing Common Measures? What, if any, specific technical assistance will you require from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts?

The major barrier is not knowing all that we need to know about Common Measures. Commonwealth Corporation has been keeping us updated on developments but the regulations are not final yet. The assistance we need is to continue to have information and discussion sessions and specific help on issues such as how our career exploration programs can do the needed academic work with clients.

3) What is your local strategy for ensuring that WIA youth programs will lead to postsecondary education, advanced training, or employment outcomes?

All funded programs are required and committed to providing follow-up services to ensure WIA participants receive the necessary support to continue to pursue education, training, and employment goals. Funded programs are selected through competitive procurement on the basis of how well they integrate education and employment competencies. The goal of such competitive procurement is to select programs that provide comprehensive services that encourage participants to develop long-term goals related to post-secondary education, training, and employment.

4) Based on your local labor market needs, what specific occupational or technical skill credentials will your youth program emphasize? How are you working with your youth service providers to ensure that their training or services are aligned with these skill credentials?

Our career explorations programs are designed to give youth exposure to careers which are in demand and pay well. The focus is on exposure, rather than industry credentials, as this is more appropriate to our level of WIA youth funding and the developmental needs of youth in our local area. Given the youth unemployment rate, fewer and fewer youth get jobs as teens; the need for career exposure is critical in Boston. This provides information youth can use to decide on careers as they mature. Our career explorations provide this—and hands-on training—in high demand areas such as construction and health care. It is through industry partnerships that we align skills and introduce interested youth to the next step in pursuing a specific career.

We align the services with industry credentials by requiring industry partnerships as a component of each of the career explorations programs. The Boston Carpenters Apprenticeship Training Fund provides the training and career exploration activities for youth who participate in the construction career explorations program. We have expanded on that to establish an employer-union group, the Building Careers Partnership, which is dedicated to creating pathways into construction careers for Boston youth. This includes both in-school youth and out-of-school youth in programs such as YouthBuild and construction career explorations.

DRAFT- Boston's FY 2007 WIA Plan Executive Summary

Through these partnerships, youth have secured permanent jobs in construction and apprenticeships with local unions.

In the case of the health careers programs, the programs are run at the hospitals, where students are trained in universal precautions, CPR and department-specific protocols in their internships. These programs also provide college awareness and preparation activities as most high-paying health care jobs require post-secondary education—and health professionals and program staff reinforce this message. These programs provide youth with a strong incentive to remain in—or return to—school.

5) Regarding the Literacy and Numeracy measure, which of the approved National Reporting System assessment instruments will be used to conduct pre-tests and post-tests for out-of-school youth who are basic skill deficient? How are you working with your framework service provider to ensure the appropriate assessment, development of an ISS, and referral to a WIA youth service provider? How are you working with your youth service providers to ensure the provision of appropriate services that will yield a greater likelihood of a positive skill gain?

We are currently using the TABE and will continue to do so. Boston's WIA Youth system does not use a centralized system for the framework services. Instead, each of our service providers does its own outreach, recruitment, initial eligibility determination, intake, assessment, service delivery, referrals, case management, and follow-up. We will continue to work with our providers and offer trainings, technical assistance, reports, and our review of program-wide data as well as individual client data. This will ensure both proper framework services and direct services that lead to positive skill gain.

6) How is your board working with the framework service provider and with youth service providers to ensure the timely transmission of data regarding youth services to determine exit dates, service delivery, outcomes, and the timing of follow-up services?

Jobs and Community Services Program staff work with the framework services providers and service providers (all programs do all functions as described in #5 above) to review data for the program as a whole and for individual clients. These reviews are done quarterly to ensure the proper time for an exit, proper service mix for the ISS goals, and outcomes and exits are checked for completeness and accuracy of the data. Follow-up check-ins are also part of the procedure.

7) Have you revised your existing youth contracts or youth RFP(s) to reflect the new common performance measures, emphasize the need to focus on the three new performance outcomes, and ensure that youth service providers are reporting timely management and performance information?

Boston typically issues the youth RFP every two years. Since we are currently at the mid-point of this two-year cycle, we have not yet revised our youth RFP to reflect the new common measures. We have emphasized the need to focus on the new common performance measures. Programs are working closely with staff at JCS and Commonwealth Corporation to understand and be trained in the common measures. We plan to release the next RFP in early 2007. At that time, we will have more information regarding the common measures and how they might impact service delivery.

DRAFT- Boston's FY 2007 WIA Plan Executive Summary

4. Please describe how the local area will allocate training funds and resources in FY 2007 to assure skill enhancement across the broadest adult and dislocated worker customer base.

- a. The response should describe how the local plan for customer training ensures an appropriate and equitable allocation of the area's total available resources in relation to the allocation of resources for other One-Stop Career Center services and operational cost categories versus training funds.*

As outlined above, Boston will allocate 75% of FY07 WIA service dollars for both adults and dislocated workers toward training. The remaining 25% will be directed toward the provision of intensive services by career centers. At the same time, we expect the average cost of an ITA will increase from the \$4,500 projected for FY06 to \$5,000 in FY07.

ITA approval is based on policies adopted by the Boston Workforce Investment Board that give priority to individuals who are most in need of training services (e.g. those whose skills are obsolete in the marketplace and who have substantial barriers to reemployment). These policies are outlined in the Boston Career Center Best Practice Guide.

- b. The response should clearly describe how the local One-Stop Career Center(s) will ensure a timely response to customers (job seekers and employers) training needs.*

Boston releases WIA Adult & Dislocated Worker training funds in July, November, and February in order to ensure that the entire allocation is not expended in the first few months. Thus, customers are more likely to be able to secure reemployment services, including training, over the course of the entire year. Customers who are interested in training attend Career Center Orientation sessions where program eligibility, labor market information, and the process for obtaining an individual training account are reviewed. A customer then meets individually with a Career Center Case Manager who determines if he/she is an appropriate training candidate. The next step is for the customer to research and select an approved training vendor from the state listing. Finally, the Case Manager presents the ITA to the Fiscal Agent for approval.

- c. The response should also clearly demonstrate that policies of the Board and procedures of the Title I Administrator, the Fiscal Agent (if a separate entity) and the Career Center partners support a training decision-making process that incorporates assessment of an individual customer's future employment interests and labor market demand. Please refer to decisions to prioritize funding for certain populations, spending caps, etc.*

Boston's Workforce Investment Board and the Mayor's Office of Jobs and Community Services as Fiscal Agent have designed a WIA ITA approval and case management process that includes a series of checks and balances to ensure customers receive appropriate reemployment services. These services include assessment, labor market information, counseling, training, job search and placement services. The Boston Best Practice Group, chaired by JCS and made up of Career Center and training vendor front line staff, meets bi-monthly to ensure a coordinated and timely ITA referral process. JCS monitors the Career Centers and selected training vendors over the course of the year, and the PIC conducts an annual Career Center charter review process. These policies, processes and procedures are outlined in the Boston Best Practices Guide. At present, Boston does not have a "spending cap" for individual ITAs.

DRAFT- Boston's FY 2007 WIA Plan Executive Summary

5. What specific continuous improvement initiatives are planned by all local partners in FY07 to strengthen the operation of the One-Stop Career Center(s)?
- a. *The response should describe specific quality/process improvement projects planned by the local partners to promote improvement in local service delivery for FY 2007 and should include a discussion of gains realized from the prior year's improvement initiatives and how the FY 2006 plans build on those outcomes. The response should also clearly describe how the Board, Title I Administrator and the local Career Center partners support the planned quality/process improvement initiatives.*

All activities continue to be staffed and/or advised by the Board, Title I Administrator and local partners. FY'06 activities and progress include:

- 1) Convening Workforce Advisory Group: the Workforce Advisory Group continues to be a forum where a range of stakeholders, funders and service providers come together to discuss systemic issues. Two workgroups were formed to gather information on 1) data, its availability and use and 2) service systems, components and relatedness, to identify information needed to better understand local labor market needs and identify gaps between the various systems that work and minimize the extent to which individuals do not connect with the services they need. The undertaking has turned out to be quite complex. For FY'07 the research will continue with the expectation that key issues and leverage points will be identified.
- 2) Convening BPWG: The drop out rate from training continues to be low at 4%. Referral processes between training providers and career centers have continued to be streamlined through enhanced communication. An electronic Trainee Progress Report has been implemented. For FY'07 the group will identify broader systemic concerns (e.g., the recent increase in use of online application procedures by businesses) and share best practices beyond ITA management.
- 3) Continuing a Charter Review Process: This involves customer focus groups, point of service interviews and reviewing a Strategic Plan, which includes progress on goals. It also includes continuous tracking of customer demographics and outcomes. This process will be sustained in FY'07.
- 4) Soliciting ongoing customer feedback: This is accomplished through focus groups with business and job seeker customers and interviews. The focus groups include those conducted at each career center as well as "specialty" groups. In FY'06, separate specialty groups were held with veterans and welfare customers. This process will continue in FY'07. The goal for FY'06 was 180 customer contacts. This goal was met (212). For FY07, electronic customer satisfaction surveys will be made available for business and job seeker customers.
- 5) Sustaining staff teams at each of the career centers: The centers continue to use CQI teams and methods to monitor customer flow and requirements and make changes to service offerings, both in content, structure and modality as required. In response to volume demands, the centers made considerable use of cross training and cross informing to ensure quality in customer service and to sustain staff. Resources have been provided for career

DRAFT- Boston's FY 2007 WIA Plan Executive Summary

center staff to attend training provided in the area of using outcomes to improve performance. In FY'07 methods for reviewing best practices in specific functions in a formal way across the system will possibly be explored, if the impact of the funding cuts allows it.

6) Expanding the Title I Administrator-led work groups. For FY07, this goal must be modified and the "expansion" aspects removed. Although the Title I Administrator will continue to work with groups of training providers and CC staff focused on improving training for specific groups (e.g., LES), given the fiscal realities, we do not anticipate any grand expansion of their activities. PIC/JCS staff will continue joint meetings between PIC, JCS, DOE (SABES & ALRI staff) and providers. These efforts will continue in FY'07, but as indicated above, funding cuts will impact the range and depth of activities.

7) Capacity building for system providers: A three-session series on labor market information designed to introduce common concepts, tools, terminology and sources of data was delivered to career center staff in FY'06. In FY'07 a needs assessment designed to identify continuing staff development needs in this and related areas will be conducted and training will be provided. The goal remains that of helping career center staff tighten the alignments between the skills and qualifications of job seekers and the demands of the labor market.

b. The response should specifically highlight locally generated continuous improvement plans to be implemented to assure attainment of all FY 2007 performance goals and should include a description of the anticipated outcomes and benefits to customers. If any of the 17 local performance goals were not met in FY 2005 please describe the specific activities undertaken in FY 2006 and those planned for FY 2007 to assure improvement of performance on the goals not met in FY 2005. NOTE: for performance issues on youth measures, you may reference any detailed responses in the previous information contained in Question 3.

ADULTS

In FY05, all of the performance goals for adults and dislocated workers were met and we are on track to meet them again in FY06. During FY07, performance data will be reviewed as it becomes available and ongoing TA will be provided to the career centers and training vendors as needed. For next year, we are most concerned about the impact the new, restrictive definition of "certificate" will have on Boston's performance goals. This is, of course, a concern for all areas in the state. We will continue to take an active part in the state-led activities in this regard and will also continue our proactive role locally.

YOUTH

All of the Youth performance goals were met in FY 05 and we are on track to meet them again in FY 06. This was done by reviewing each client file in MOSES for all aspects of the file, using the data given on the Crystal Report, "Title 1 Performance Review List". This report shows all clients who have problems in their files for each of the performance measures. Corrections are made with the service providers to give an accurate picture of the success, or lack of success, with the client. Service providers continue to do very good work with the clients and with this system in place, we are able to ensure the credit due for their hard work on behalf of the youth.